UNITED NATIONS

DP

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/1995/47/Add.3
29 June 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Third regular session 1995
11-15 September 1995, New York
Item 3 of the provisional agenda
UNDP

UNDP: COUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND RELATED MATTERS

Mid-term review of the fifth regional programme for Asia and the Pacific

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fifth regional programme for Asia and the Pacific introduced a number of substantive and managerial innovations, including:

(a) The adoption of a programme approach in place of a project approach;

(b) Focusing fewer programmes within three areas of concentration, namely human development through poverty alleviation, economic management and reform and environment and natural resource management;

(c) Attention to the objectives of sustainable human development in the overall programme structure;

(d) Greater decentralization;

(e) Selective use of non-United Nations-system executing agencies;

(f) Greater emphasis on subregional development cooperation.

2. From nearly 350 projects in the fourth regional programme (1987-1991), the number of components in the fifth regional programme has decreased to 12 programmes of regional scale and 32 at the subregional level. In addition, there are 13 stand-alone, small-scale projects. The problem of fragmentation seen in the fourth regional programme has now been overcome, and although some clustering of projects around common themes persists, more cohesive programme strategies are emerging.

3. While the preparations for the fifth regional programme preceded the more precise definition of the concept of sustainable human development, the fifth regional programme has been broadly shaped in terms of the principles and elements of sustainable human development, with targeted interventions to alleviate poverty, address gender issues, generate employment and protect the environment.

4. Within the area of human development through poverty alleviation, five programmes address issues concerning regional poverty alleviation, water and sanitation, urban management, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and human development indicators, respectively. Each of these programmes has a focus on policy and operational activities to benefit the poor and disadvantaged. Similarly, countries have identified programmes in the areas of poverty, water, food security, basic life-skills and the development of human resources as meriting special support through subregional groupings.

5. In the area of economic management and reform, at the regional level, three programmes address key issues in trade and investment (especially issues which have arisen since the Uruguay Round), the experience of economic reform in the region, and management improvements in transport and communications as a vital aspect of economic development in the region, respectively. Subregional emphases include assistance for cooperation between countries in economic and

financial management, small- and medium-scale enterprise development, cooperation in telecommunications, Mekong river basin development and Tumen river area development.

6. In the area of environment and the management of natural resources, four regional programmes focus on energy and environment issues, farmer-centred agricultural resources management, geographical information systems (GTS) and remote sensing for sustainable management and on the use of isotopes and radiation for environmentally sound technologies, respectively. At the subregional level, South Pacific biodiversity conservation, disaster mitigation, the Pacific sustainable development network, energy, forestry, fisheries, temperate-zone food crops, air pollution from coal and trade and environment are some of the subjects receiving priority attention.

7. At the subregional level, while programmes are clearly located within the three areas of concentration described above, there is considerable diversity among the programmes that are being implemented. In the South Pacific subregion, there is a particular emphasis on environmental and human development issues. In the South Asia programme, poverty alleviation has a high profile. In countries which are members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the focus is on institutional interlinkages. In North-East Asia, the focus is on the development of the Tumen river basin and also on critical environmental issues. In Indochina, the fifth regional programme continues the long-standing UNDP commitment to the development of the Mekong basin.

8. The fifth regional programme has allocated its resources evenly between pan-Asia-Pacific regional programmes (51.8 per cent) and the programmes of the five subregions of ASEAN, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Pacific (SOPAC), North-East Asia and Indochina (48.2 per cent). SOPAC receives almost one half the subregional allocations, and it should be noted that this subregion is unique in that the resources obtained through the subregional programme are almost equal to resources obtained by the countries through UNDP indicative planning figures (IPFs). Many activities are undertaken through subregional programmes for cost-effectiveness and to obtain economies of scale.

II. TIMING, PARTICIPATION AND PROCESS

9. The mid-term review was designed as a process. The output was an assessment of the manner in which the fifth regional programme has evolved, while the review itself was a capacity-building exercise, especially at the country level, which alerted key constituencies to the opportunities afforded by regional programmes. The mid-term review process as a whole has enhanced the profile of regional programmes and their place in the overall process of external support to development.

10. Governments, executing agencies and UNDP country offices were closely involved in the review process from the start. Upon request, selected Governments prepared several papers on themes crucial to regional programming. A review of the Pacific subregional programme was carried out in November 1994, involving the participation of Governments, United Nations agencies,

multilateral and bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The review process enabled a collective assessment of the effectiveness of the programme, validated high-impact or potentially high-impact projects, and established agreement on projects which needed to be adjusted in terms of focus and implementation arrangements. The review also provided an indicative strategy for developing parameters for the next UNDP regional programme in the Pacific.

11. A team of five senior consultants drawn from the region and with familiarity and expertise in technical cooperation visited 17 countries. The team met first in Bangkok to arrive at a common understanding of the task at hand and for discussions with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations-agency regional offices located there. Each member of the team then visited four to five countries over a period of one month, after which they met in New Delhi, India, to synthesize their finding and arrive at conclusions.

12. The output of this extensive effort resulted in a joint issues paper (JIP), which was the main document for the regional development cooperation (RDC) meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at the end of March 1995. The JIP, which raised many significant issues about the operational aspects of the present programme and the future direction of regional programmes, was generally endorsed by the Governments at the meeting.

13. Before the RDC meeting, several eminent persons of the region were brought together with representatives of Governments to discuss the possibilities for regional cooperation in the coming years. This initial discussion strengthened the focus of the RDC meeting on new and emerging possibilities in areas of economic growth with equity, poverty reduction, information-sharing for sustainable development, job creation, the environment and the advancement of women.

III. PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS

14. There are two broad aspects to the progress and achievements made thus far in the fifth regional programme:

(a) Achievement in terms of substantive contributions to institution; and capacity-building, including the delivery of high-priority technical services, contributions which also should be seen in the context of the facilitating the implementation of international mandates and agendas;

(b) Innovative managerial and administrative reforms, the objectives of which have been to introduce a greater focus and relevance to regional programmes.

15. Services, when provided on a regional and subregional scale, are cost-effective and have enabled small-scale interventions on important issues at the country level.

A. Contributions to institution-building and capacity-building

16. Many regional technical constituencies and formal and informal professional networks have emerged as a result of regional programmes, for example, trade-training institutions, the Regional Network on Safe Pesticides Production and Information for Asia and the Pacific (RENPAP), the Regional Macroeconomic Research Network, the Regional Network on GIS and Remote Sensing, the Association of Development Finance Institutes in Asia and Pacific (ADFIAP). The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regional network of national nuclear research institutes under the Regional Cooperative Arrangement (RCA) has been strengthened by support from regional programmes.

17. Regional projects and programmes also have led to a considerable degree of interaction among technical personnel, which would not otherwise have been forthcoming. They have thus facilitated the diffusion of knowledge and best practices among participating countries. As noted in the report of the RDC meeting, programmes focused on science and technology were considered as particularly valuable to capacity-building in the region. The ESCAP-executed programme for remote sensing and GIS has facilitated the application of technology for the management of tropical ecosystems, land and water resources management. The programme on the use of isotopes for environmentally sound and sustainable development is disseminating the use of tracer technology for the identification of water pollution. Utilizing the Pacific Power Association, the Pacific island power sector project facilitated the networking and exchange of expertise and experience of technical and managerial staff of power utility authorities in addressing and resolving operational and management issues in the power sector. With support provided through the regional fisheries project for the South Pacific the Forum Fisheries Agency was induced to establish a regional network for the exchange of information on Pacific island marine resources and fisheries management practices.

18. There has been a concerted attempt to use regional programmes to enable countries to implement the provisions of multilaterally agreed norms and standards in key sectors. A few programmes may be seen even as assisting in the preparatory processes associated with the development of regional agendas. For example, the Remote Sensing and GIS programme supported the senior experts meeting in preparation for the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Beijing, China, in September 1994. The Conference adopted the Beijing Declaration on Space Technology Applications for Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia, which is now the guiding principle for use of that technology in support of development. Countries have been assisted to understand and conceptualize their participation in the Uruguay Round negotiations, and, more recently, to identify the changes needed at the national level to comply with the signed agreements.

19. Similarly, programmes such as the urban management programme for Asia and the Pacific (UMPAP), the farmer-centred agricultural resource management (FARM) programme and the programme for Asian cooperation in energy and environment are pursuing actions along the lines of implementing Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), notably, integrated resource planning.

20. The programme to strengthen multisectoral and community responses to the HIV epidemic in Asia and Pacific is closely linked to the implementation of the United Nations mandates in this field. The regional programme is assisting countries to become aware of and interact with the newly established United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS and will be an active regional link under the overall thrust of that programme as it develops. NGOs, the private sector, economists and others in the region are being helped to build strong networks with the capacities to address the economic, legal, ethical, social, participatory and other issues related to HIV/AIDS. For example, support to a study by an NGO in Madras, India, on the vulnerability of organized industrial labour has resulted in the Employers' Federation of South India starting a project among its members, and the report of the NGO has reached high-level policy makers in the Government of India.

21. There are increasing opportunities for regional programmes to act as a bridge between multilateral and international agendas on the one hand, and national action programmes on the other. Support is being provided to establish the foundation for reconciling trade and environmental policies in the ASEAN region, one concrete step to achieving this being the creation of a database on the use of trade and environmental measures in international agreements. The regional programme for energy and the environment is assisting in reconciling energy and environment policies. In pursuing the implementation of the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, the basic education and life skills programme in the Pacific has made an important contribution to upgrading primary school curricula and the quality of teachers. Sustainability of the programme has been assured by the provision of government recurrent budgets. The projects on regional biodiversity and forestry development in the South Pacific address the need for a regional approach to environment and the management of natural resources. The former project, designed to protect biodiversity in the Pacific island countries by facilitating the establishment of a series of large, diverse conservation area projects (terrestrial, marine and combined), has already made important contributions towards generating environmental awareness and assists Pacific island countries in formulating projects to be carried out through partnerships between land-owning communities, Governments and NGOs. The forestry programme has used the institutional vehicle of the Pacific Heads of Forestry meetings to adopt a coordinated strategy and to mobilize political support for the management of the forestry sector, particularly, the prudent management of commercial logging operations. The project has supported national- and community-level capacity-building activities, through training of trainers, community participation and extension programmes.

22. Regional projects and programmes have contributed to intraregional and intrasubregional cooperation. The subregional approach adopted as part of the South Pacific forestry development project strategy has been particularly effective in attracting financial contributions from other development partners to support subregional cooperation in forestry management and capacity-building at the national and local levels, including such areas as policy-planning, participatory planning and advocacy for community involvement for sustainable resource management. Through the regional programme for Asian cooperation in energy and environment, the Australian Coal Board, with support from the

Australian Agency for International Development, provides technical assistance to participating countries in the environmentally sound use of coal for energy.

23. During the fifth regional programme, cooperation in fields such as trade and investment, urban management, energy and environment and economic reform, has been facilitated through the sharing of experiences. For example, work on environment and trade has included case-studies of the mining sector in a number of countries and raised awareness among policy makers of the need for appropriate environmental policies and regulations regarding investment and operations in mining. The remote-sensing and GIS programme has facilitated the sharing of the experiences of the Chinese Science and Technology Commission on the uses of space technology and applications for the management of natural resources.

24. Several activities in these programmes have been aimed at bringing high-level policy makers together, so that best practices in policy-making within the region are shared among a wider group. The regional programme on strengthening regional cooperation in macroeconomic management for sustainable development organizes a yearly high-level symposium for policy makers to present and discuss results of joint research on a key topic chosen for the year. In 1994, the meeting examined the impact on national policies of the conclusion of the Uruguay Round negotiations. Under the trade and investment programme, a high-level round-table discussion focuses each year on critical issues in foreign direct investment for the region. In 1994, the round-table discussion brought considerations of backward linkages to the attention of policy makers. A subregional advocacy programme for equitable and sustainable human development in the Pacific has generated high-level political support for issues and strategy options for people-centred and sustainable development, resulting in the production of the Pacific Human Development Report in 1994, and the promulgation of the Suva Declaration on Sustainable Human Development in the Pacific and its subsequent endorsement by the highest regional political body in the Pacific, the South Pacific Forum.

25. The facilitation of regional information infrastructures was another method adopted to promote intraregional cooperation. For example, a database of investment and trade information is being established through facilities of the Chambers of Commerce in the region. Regional cooperation also facilitates the interchange of successful practices at the field level, for example, in the broad area of poverty alleviation and in experiences such as in rural credit schemes. Supported by a subcontract under the regional poverty alleviation programme, the Foundation for Development Cooperation (Australia) has conducted seven national workshops on banking with the poor, produced a report on best practices of banking with the poor, and carried out a study on transaction costs. The workshops have greatly increased the number of NGOs involved in banking programmes for the poor, and have brought the formal banking sector together with NGOs, by showing that commercial banking with the poor can be financially viable if lending operations are linked to NGOs. Through the control of fruit flies project, Pacific island countries have gained access to the latest technologies in Australia and the United States, appropriately tested and adapted for application in the subregion, with the result that markets in Australia, New Zealand and Canada for high-value vegetables and fruits have been opened to the participating countries.

26. A programme to assist institutional development for poverty reduction at the grass-roots level in South Asia has established national teams in each country. In Bangladesh, these teams have facilitated the formation of 95 development-oriented village organizations with a total membership of 7,000, which have accumulated savings of 500,000 takas in less that one year. The village organizations are exposed to best practices and address such social issues as minimal literacy, access to safe drinking water and watershed management. The lessons from the integrated village-level efforts will provide the foundation for policy analysis and change. Building capacity to monitor the progress towards the SAARC heads of State goal of poverty eradication is also supported and updated information is provided for each annual meeting of the heads of State.

27. Regional programmes have been instrumental in the implementation of regional legislative mandates established by intergovernmental bodies and ESCAP. These mandates for regional action were developed after extensive consultation among Governments, and their implementation hinges largely on UNDP regional programming arrangements. An illustration of this type of regional programme is the support provided for the Transport and Communications Decade in Asia and the Pacific. UNDP facilitated a mid-term review of the decade, resulting in a revised action plan, some aspects of which are supported by the UNDP regional programme.

28. Subregional programmes have made an important contribution in establishing many collaborative arrangements within subregions. For example, capacity-building within the framework of ASEAN has resulted in the development of a mechanism for monitoring the ASEAN Declaration on the Advancement of Women; the introduction into the ASEAN secretariat of a management audit and a staff performance appraisal system; and the formulation of an ASEAN plan of action for investment promotion. Assistance to the countries of the Mekong basin has resulted in the conclusion of an agreement for the creation of a Mekong Commission and supporting institutional structure. This unique agreement includes specific clauses which ensure that decisions taken concerning the use of the waters of the Mekong river balance environmental sustainability and development. Under the agreement, countries will jointly pursue sustainable development in irrigation, power, navigation, environment, tourism and other areas. In North-East Asia, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea have, through the facilitation of the regional programme of UNDP, been able to work with Japan, Russia, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and others to conduct pre-feasibility studies and to develop a joint regional development strategy for the area around the Tumen river basin. This assistance has led to an historic intergovernmental agreement to establish the institutional foundations for cooperation and the creation of a commission for consultations and coordinated development of the area.

29. The subregional programme in the South Pacific has clearly resulted in a range of technical services being made available to the small island countries, while stimulating greater cooperation in the region. For example, the Pacific subregional project on fiscal and monetary management reform and statistical improvement (EFMAR) has been particularly successful in developing the technical capacity of the Suva-based Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre and in

extending the Centre's services to Pacific island countries in developing government capacity in such areas as budget formulation, tax administration and reform measures, bank supervision, and balance of payments statistics.

30. The programmes in the South Pacific have sustained subregional institutions. The Pacific subregional programmes have successfully developed the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme into a full-fledged, capable institution in the Pacific. To facilitate greater ownership and responsibility by Governments in managing externally funded programmes, UNDP has encouraged Pacific regional institutions to assume the management functions of three projects: the fisheries programme (Forum Fisheries Agency); the water supply and sanitation project (South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission); and the telecommunication training and development project (Forum Secretariat).

31. The fifth regional programme emphasized the central role of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) in regional programmes, especially in the current context in the Asia and the Pacific region, where many countries have now developed important technical capacities and are in a position to exchange such expertise with other countries in the region. In implementing the programmes of the fifth regional programme, the TCDC has been practised, for example, in the areas of trade and investment, economic reform, energy, bio-diversity, urban management and HIV/AIDS. Under the ESCAP-executed programme to support GIS and remote sensing, Thailand has provided experts and training facilities through TCDC arrangements. TCDC was a particularly prominent feature of the remote-sensing programme, facilitating, for example, the provision of training by China to other participant countries.

32. In some programmes, countries have selected institutions in the region as resource centres in many fields. Consequently, those countries are developing a regional outreach that was not available to them before. The Korean Development Institute (KDI) has been awarded research contracts under the Trade and Investment Programme. Under the Energy and Environment Programme, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok executes a major subcontract for integration of environment and energy planning. Under the same programme, the Asian Pacific Development Center is developing a series of 14 energy scenarios for environmentally constrained development, using national teams. The regional office of the Inter-Press Service (IPS) (Manila, the Philippines), contracted under the regional programme for awareness creation for sustainable development, is building relations between the media and the NGO community to foster communication and partnerships.

B. Resource declines and programming

33. The reduction of available fifth-cycle indicative planning figure (IPF) resources has seriously affected the ability to deliver the programmes planned under the fifth regional programme. In many areas, programme formulation was not completed, owing to lack of resources for follow-up implementation. At the regional level, programmes in health, education, financial sector reforms, air pollution, aquaculture and sustainable fisheries and disaster preparedness were affected, among others. Within subregional groupings, programmes in vocational training, employment, private sector development and small-holder agriculture

were similarly affected. In the RDC meeting, Governments were unanimous in calling for greater assured funding for regional cooperation initiatives.

C. Managerial and administrative reforms

34. The adoption of a programme approach has facilitated a reduction in the number of scattered projects. For example, during the fourth regional programme, there were 39 small-scale projects in the areas of trade and investment, executed by nine different agencies of the system, for a total of $25 million. Under the fifth regional programme, there is one programme, with five United Nations agencies cooperating under a single programme document with an approved amount of $14 million. The approach has also facilitated intersectoral and interdisciplinary approaches in designing and implementing programmes, such as the single focus of management reform and improvement across the many subsectors of transportation and communications.

35. The programme approach has also contributed to a greater sense of ownership among Governments. The promotion of ownership has been pursued in four broad ways:

(a) There were extensive consultations with Governments, starting with a seminar on regional cooperation in 1991, where high-level government officials were present. In addition, Governments were consulted on their priorities through correspondence and questionnaires. After the fifth regional programme was formulated, it was endorsed by Governments at the Meeting of Aid Coordinators, held in Manila, the Philippines, in January 1992. Subsequently, Governments were also consulted on individual programme design, most frequently through sector-specific meetings on the issues in the region and potential solutions, thus providing the basis for the preparation of specific programme/project documents.

(b) Non-governmental actors - NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector - were included in the consultative process for programme formulation and in monitoring and advisory meetings during implementation. For example, the ASEAN chambers of commerce are represented at the annual tripartite review meeting of the trade and investment programme, and the Asian NGO Coalition has been active in the formulation and implementation of the FARM programme, the IPS in awareness creation for sustainable development, the Aga Khan Foundation in the SAARC poverty alleviation programme, and the NGO CASHPOOR in the regional poverty alleviation programme.

(c) Relevant professional and technical constituencies have been associated with the design and implementation of programmes, especially through executing agencies; this has created a modest sense of shared ownership of these programmes in technical and professional circles in the region. For example, South Asian NGOs were consulted in preparing the SAARC poverty alleviation programme; the Asia Pacific Telecommunity is involved in the Transport and Communications Programme; ASEAN chambers of commerce support database information-sharing under the trade and investment programme; and the Association of Development Finance Institutions in Asia and Pacific interact on trade and finance issues.

(d) Just as the national programmes are the framework for country-level technical programmes, agreed regional and multilateral agendas of Governments have been the basis for regional programme development:

(i) At the global level, the priorities of Agenda 21 of UNCED have been included in the FARM programme, General Assembly resolutions on HIV/AIDS have formed the basis of the HIV/AIDS programme, and Uruguay Round agreements on trade have been included in the trade and investment programme;

(ii) At the regional level, the resolutions of ESCAP on the Transport and Communications Decade formed the basis of the transport and communications programme, and seven-district cooperation on poverty was included in the regional poverty alleviation programme;

(iii) At the subregional level, the SAARC resolutions on poverty eradication formed the basis of the South Asia poverty programme, and the ASEAN Summit decision to establish the ASEAN Free Trade Area formed the basis for the subregional trade and investment programme.

36. The fifth regional programme was intended to help to generate more financial and technical resources from Governments and institutions. A considerable amount has been achieved in this regard. For example, all agencies under the trade and investment programme have been able to mobilize additional resources in the areas supported by the programme, such as small- and medium-scale enterprise expansion in trade, training in intellectual property, advisory services and training in foreign direct investment, and trade database development. Parallel-financing or trust funds allocated by donors to executing agencies have contributed significantly to the overall goals of the regional cooperation desired by Governments. The amount of cost-sharing flowing directly through the UNDP projects, $10.8 million, has not been as significant as originally expected. In addition, a total of $17.5 million has been allocated from the Global Environment Facility for a programme on the development of low-cost greenhouse gas emissions reduction plans in Asia and a programme on the prevention and management of marine pollution in east Asian seas.

37. Notwithstanding some successful collaborations with non-governmental entities, more needs to be done. At the mid-point of the programme and with few resources for new initiatives, this will take the form of greater involvement in implementation, the provision of advice and monitoring. For example, more could be done to enrich the content of programmes related to economic and trade issues through consultation with the private sector. Equally, NGOs could play a larger role, especially in the social and environmental sectors.

38. Gender concerns and issues are clearly written into programme documents. While some gender-related activities exist, the overall performance of the regional programme in that area could be improved. There are many programmes where gender issues could be brought more into the mainstream than is the current practice. Discussions between UNDP and executing agencies on mid-term adjustments to activities will provide an opportunity to increase the focus on gender analysis and implementation issues.

39. An issue of broad agreement during the mid-term review concerns the lack of clear and proactive information strategies for pursuit by programme executing agencies, which has led to a lack of awareness of the achievements of the programmes among partners and the larger society. In addition, the media has been largely overlooked. It is expected that the introduction of a coherent information strategy into each programme will make a significant difference in the impact on development of the fifth regional programme.

40. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been built into the programmes. There has been an attempt to define benchmarks, however, they often are not satisfactory for future evaluation, as they are general descriptions of the broad sectoral and thematic situations. More focus is needed to define institutional and capacity issues. Benchmarks at the regional and subregional levels should focus on capacity-building.

41. To conclude the present chapter on programme achievements, it is worth noting the RDC findings on the relevance of the current programmes: "The current areas of concentration of the fifth regional programme - human development, economic reform, environment and natural resources - continue to be appropriate in the context of regional priorities and, equally, the programmes that are being implemented so far are addressing issues which are in line with those priorities. In the sixth regional programme, it is important that attention to these same concerns continues without any sharp break in substantive terms. Administratively and managerially, there should be new ways of organizing these activities more efficiently."

IV. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

42. The shift from a project to a programme approach called for innovations in management and monitoring. Changes introduced included new management systems; several executing agencies within each programme; and decentralization and an enlarged role for principal project resident representatives (PPRRs). The adoption of a programme approach against the background of a project-based system led in some instances to the clustering of projects around common themes. The emphasis placed on organizing programmes at the subregional level has also led to the emergence of important management issues, especially with regard to the appropriate forms of subregional organization. Some of these issues are examined briefly below.

43. It is clear from the design of programmes that most of them incorporated a wide spectrum of tasks to be undertaken over a period of three to four years. For example, the Trade and Investment Programme includes several elements - intraregional trade, post-Uruguay Round issues, small- and medium-scale enterprises, investment issues and intellectual property. In urban management, the programme consisted of a similar spread of activities. This kind of issue-clustering was the result of an amalgam of factors: previous engagement through projects on a variety of subjects; government demands for technical cooperation in specific areas; wide-ranging regional agendas such as those for transport and communications; and the capacities and demarcations of executing agencies. This type of approach cannot be equated entirely with an integrated intersectoral and interdisciplinary approach to programme design; it was a result of the hybrid

nature of the fifth regional programme, a "halfway house" between projects and programmes. A more genuine interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach is envisaged for the next programme.

44. The JIP has clearly noted that there were many styles of management within the fifth regional programme and that the executing agencies have yet to establish a consistent management structure in their programme designs. Individual programmes with a wide range of activities required the involvement of more than one executing agency. Consequently, in several programmes (e.g., the FARM programme, UMPAP and the poverty alleviation programme), a programme manager has been appointed to coordinate the activities of the many components. In some programmes, there are several chief technical advisors (CTAs), who are expected to report to the programme manager. In others, for example, the trade and investment programme, there are no programme managers or CTAs, and each of the five executing agencies uses its in-house resources to manage certain aspects of the programme. Coordination is left to regular, informal contacts between agencies and to the tripartite review, which thus far has taken place annually. There are many other management systems between the two contrasting styles described above. For example, in the HIV/AIDS programme, which is executed by one agency only and which has one CTA, problems of coordination are less cumbersome than in other programmes.

45. The mid-term review found that it was not feasible to make firm judgements on the relative performance of the varied management styles described above. However, a few tentative conclusions were drawn:

(a) First, it is not productive to stress the aspect of coordination in programmes which are not structurally integrated and consist of a clustering of projects;

(b) Second, if administrative and coordination costs are to be kept down, executing agencies need to use their in-house resources for programme management;

(c) Third, it is necessary now to move towards the design of conceptually integrated programmes for the future. Programme components cannot be tailored a priori to the needs and capacities of individual executing agencies.

46. The role of the PPRR is critical to the efficient management of individual programmes. However, decentralization to PPRRs needs to be accompanied by improved matching of programme locations and resources. Of the 12 programmes in the fifth regional programme, 6 are located in Bangkok, Thailand, 2 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and 2 in New Delhi, India. It is clearly evident that decentralization has meant a concentration in three or four centres, in particular, Bangkok, which is the point of contact with the regional commission, ESCAP. With fewer pan-Asia-Pacific programmes, it is not feasible to spread them more widely, and most countries will not have PPRR offices. When selecting PPRRs for pan-Asia-Pacific programmes, greater attention should be paid to their suitability in terms of technical resources available, especially within the country. Further, the JIP urged that programmes be decentralized after the stages of conception and design, since design interlinkages between programmes could be established more easily through a more centralized approach.

47. National execution was pursued for 26 programmes with combined a total budget of $28.5 million or 20.9 per cent of the resources of the fifth programme. The review team did not find, however, that performance was superior in those programmes when compared to performance in programmes executed by United Nations agencies, although the sense of ownership by the intergovernmental organizations entrusted with execution was clearly greater. It is more difficult to utilize the services of national institutions as executing agencies for programmes which cover a number of countries for many reasons, including lack of previous experience; problems in relationships with other country institucions and sharing financial allocations; and an underlying demand for equity of responsibilities between countries.

48. The issue of organizing programmes at the regional and subregional levels was examined in depth during the review process. It was concluded that programmes on a regional scale are essential for tapping those opportunities which emerge from linking the dynamic economies of Pacific rim countries with the rest of the region. Through such linkages and the channels so created, flows of knowledge, technology, trade and investment can be facilitated. Regional programmes are particularly important in areas of trade and economic reforms. Subregional programmes address priorities defined by high-level intergovernmental bodies in the subregions and often help to facilitate cross-border cooperation with immediate neighbours. Environment and natural resources management as well as growth-triangle arrangements also lend themselves to subregional approaches.

49. With regard to subregional programmes, there is also a demand from many countries for flexible programme formulation based on shared interests rather than on strict geographic criteria. Including selected countries outside of a subregion, as appropriate, could enhance the results and impact.

50. Almost all programmes are expected to pursue the establishment of linkages with other related programmes at all levels, although some programmes may cover activities which are not being undertaken at country level. In accordance with the programme approach, linkages should be established with government and intergovernmental programmes and with the activities of other donors.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND PLAN OF ACTION

51. The RDC called for a comprehensive regional vision through which emerging opportunities for greater cooperation can be fully exploited. A new paradigm, which will enable critical connections to be made among countries in the region to enhance the intensity of regional cooperation, is required and this new paradigm should guide the design of the future regional programme.

52. In that spirit, the mid-term review has set out in broad outline a plan of action to guide the adjustment of the fifth regional programmes and the subsequent formulation of regional programmes. For most programmes, such adjustments are not of a major nature, but will, nevertheless, maximize efficiency and further target activities in line with the four priority areas of sustainable human development mandated by the Executive Board in its decision 1994/14.

53. Four guidelines will determine the adjustment process:

(a) Cost-effective management: while monitoring, management and programme administration in regional programmes across several countries necessarily involve certain unavoidable costs, these costs should be reduced further. Current practices will be adjusted so that by the end of 1996 consistent and comprehensive structures can be put in place under the next generation of programmes;

(b) Sustainable, people-centred development: each programme should intensify its activities and enhance its impact in the four UNDP priority areas - the elimination of poverty, the protection and regeneration of the environment, the creation of jobs, and the advancement of women;

(c) High impact: in view of the severe resource constraints, activities should focus more precisely on high-impact issues. Therefore, some activities will be dropped. Programmes will be adjusted to avoid any further engagement in issues and areas which are considered to be either too basic or too marginal to be covered within the regional programme;

(d) Preparation for the sixth regional programme: Governments in the RDC meeting noted that the three areas of concentration of the fifth regional programme continue to remain valid in terms of the cooperation and development issues in the region. However, the sixth regional programme should contain individual programmes which are even more focused and which contribute to the achievement of a coherent concept for each area of concentration. Consequently, programmes should be adjusted at the present time to enable activities within them to support movement towards a greater focus under the sixth regional programme.

54. The above-mentioned four guidelines are the basis for systematic review by UNDP and Governments, in collaboration with the executing agencies, of each ongoing programme, the results of which will be reflected in the design of workplans.

55. Several objectives have been identified through the review process as defining the next regional programming cycle:

(a) To take advantage of emerging opportunities, programmes should focus more efficiently on exploiting opportunities to remove gaps and ensure continuity. Consequently, greater attention is required to bridging relationships between countries in the Pacific rim and those in the Asian hinterland (South Asia, Indochina and Central Asia);

(b) To assist in the transition to a globalizing market economy, for many countries in the region, programmes should facilitate the transfer of experience in managing an extremely critical period of economic and social transition. The imperatives of globalization and of market economies cannot be denied, although it is also imperative that more vulnerable groups of the population, which constitute relatively large sections of the populations of countries in the region, need to be protected from the operations of unbridled market forces.

The focus should be on enabling poor and vulnerable groups to benefit from new opportunities in a globalizing market economy;

(c) As a catalyst for other regional cooperation arrangements, regional programmes can make an important contribution in achieving consistency and harmonization in an international context where multilateral rules and conventions of governance are an integral part of national governance.

56. The mid-term review, and more particularly the RDC meeting, emphasized several features that should govern the design of regional programmes:

(a) The priority areas of sustainable human development (see para. 53 (b) above) should be addressed through mechanisms which empower the poor and stress their productive contribution to the economy and society. Sustainable human development must be seen as a holistic concept, addressing both growth and equity issues. Social sector issues and programmes relating to poverty reduction should have high priority;

(b) Regional programmes should be targeted specifically at the sharing of natural, technical and financial resources, transboundary issues, and common and interlinked problems. Programmes should be selective, taking up critical issues which are best addressed, or which can only be addressed, at a regional level. Countries should participate in individual programmes based on their shared interest in the specific issue. This is likely to enhance subregional and other flexible groupings of countries, which will not be based strictly on geographic criteria;

(c) There should be strong focus on using science and technology as a tool, especially to achieve the goals of sustainable human development and to improve the productivity of the poor;

(d) Cooperation in trade and economic reform and job creation and their supporting policy environments should be an important underpinning of regional cooperation and growth.

57. The review also called for the following changes in the processes used in pursuit of the programme approach:

(a) Programmes should be built around a lead subject area (e.g., agriculture, trade, health, or any subsector thereof), and key elements of sustainable human development strategies should be built into them. Taking into consideration current administrative demarcations in the subject areas, such a process would enable intersectoral and interdisciplinary approaches;

(b) Programmes should be governed by a clear strategy, thus avoiding the clustering of projects or grouping of essentially national activities;

(c) An individual programme should be the framework of action at all levels of activity, whether regional, subregional or mini-regional, within which various actors, including the specialized agencies of the United Nations, could make their distinctive contributions. It should also enable linkages with other donors and with country-level activities;

(d) Decentralization of programme management should be pursued in a structured way, with the PPRR role enhanced and a special role for the UNDP Office in Bangkok, Thailand, in view of its liaison function with ESCAP;

(e) UNDP country offices should play a more active role in regional programme development and implementation; act as conduits for intensive and specific consultations with Governments; form part of a team with the PPRR for monitoring and evaluation; facilitate opportunities for individual countries to initiate cooperative activities of interest and priority to them;

(f) At the beginning of each programme, preparatory assistance should be used to provide time and opportunity to fully establish benchmarks and criteria to measure success; to utilize participatory approaches in final programme formulation; to fully involve potential funding partners in a dialogue with Governments; and to ensure the participation of private sector, NGOs and other actors, as appropriate to each programme.

58. It also was suggested that new procedures be adopted to enable a more pluralistic approach to programme design and implementation. Resources available for the regional programmes should be channelled in several ways for different types of convergent activities:

(a) A modest regional initiatives facility would enable high-profile activities, especially research on selected critical regional issues, and contribute to policy development;

(b) A country initiatives facility would enable cooperative activities in selected areas, based on individual country initiatives, provided that at least two other countries wish to cooperate on the same issue and that the issue is consistent with the thrust of the overall UNDP regional programme;

(c) A technical-networks financing facility would enable professional and technical networks in the region to pursue actively, over a predictable and longer period of time, key regional development issues;

(d) An interregional cooperation facility would enable the pursuit of cooperative activities with other regions, especially with Africa, Latin America and the Central Asian republics, in areas of priority to the Asia and Pacific region.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

59. The mid-term review concluded that regional programmes continue to offer a range of technical cooperation services which are valuable for policy- and capacity-building in the region. Those services are particularly important in enabling countries in the region to conform to new multilateral agendas and norms. More specifically, the review determined that:

(a) A particular contribution of the fifth regional programme has been to stimulate intraregional and intrasubregional cooperation;

(b) The fifth regional programme has been instrumental in implementing regional and subregional intergovernmental mandates;

(c) Many transboundary issues have been addressed and a special contribution is evident in the area of science and technology;

(d) Regional TCDC stimulated through regional programmes is an important factor in capacity-building, although further refinements are required;

(e) The fifth regional programme has made strenuous efforts to encourage ownership among Governments of the programmes in which they are participants;

(f) A structured management system applicable to all programmes, and thus transparent to Governments, should be further refined;

(g) Decentralization and the role of the PPRR should be enhanced;

(h) Better linkages with relevant national programmes should be pursued;

(i) Issues such as gender and the role of NGOs and the private sector should become even more central in programme design and implementation;

(j) Supporting partnerships and additional resources must be actively sought and enhanced from their current level;

(k) Information flows to all partners and to the public at large must be improved to enhance awareness of the impact of programmes.

60. Based on the review, the following major changes are recommended for the next programming cycle:

(a) Individual programmes should be built around a specific sector or theme, with all regional, subregional and mini-regional activities in the specific sector under the management of that programme;

(b) Innovative financing arrangements should be made, which will include a regional initiatives facility, a country initiatives facility, a technical networks facility and an interregional facility;

(c) Ownership and decentralization should be ensured, particularly through a greater role for UNDP country offices in the consultative processes with Governments, thereby enabling individual countries to respond clearly and continuously to programme development;

(d) Through the use of preparatory assistance in all new programmes, the identification of benchmarks and measurement tools should be integrated systematically into programmes, and resource mobilization should begin at the earliest stages.

Annex

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

I. RESOURCES

	$	$
A. Resources available for regional programme period		
IPF	130 056 000 a/	
Estimated cost-sharing	11 342 174	
Total		141 398 174
B. Commitments		
Approved programme/project budgets b/		
Approved and allocated IPF	139 287 000	
Approved and unallocated IPF	-	
Subtotal		139 287 000
Approved cost-sharing	11 342 174	
Approved and unallocated cost-sharing	-	
Subtotal		11 342 174
Pipeline programmes/projects		
IPF	-	
Cost-sharing	-	
Total		150 629 174
C. Balance of resource available for further programming		
IPF		(9 231 000) c/
Cost-sharing		-
Balance of resources available		(9 231 000)

(Footnotes on following page)

(Footnotes to table)

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a/ Compared to $160.9 million originally anticipated for the fifth intercountry programme.

b/ "Approved and allocated" refer to those programmes and projects approved by the Action Committee or Bureau Project Appraisal Committee for which there exist detailed, signed documents and budgets. "Approved and unallocated" represent the balance of funds available to the programme or projects which have yet to be reflected in specific budget lines.

c/ Ongoing negotiations with executing agencies for downward revision of budgets are expected to result in a total budget reduction of approximately $9 million, and actual expenditures will fall within the IPF resources available.

II. PROPOSED (P) AND ACTUAL (A) ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES BY AREA OF CONCENTRATION

(Thousands of dollars)

Area of concentration	IPF		Cost-Sharing		Total		Percentage of total	
	(P)	(A)	(P)	(A)	(P)	(A)	(P)	(A)
Economic reform	45 000	39 558	1 000	3 925	46 000	43 483	27.7	28.9
Environment and natural resources	45 000	47 636	1 000	706	46 000	48 342	27.7	32.0
Human development	45 000	47 218	2 000	6 511	47 000	53 729	28.3	35.7
Other	14 500	4 875	1 000	200	15 500	5 075	9.3	3.4
Unprogrammed reserve	11 400	-	-	-	11 400	-	7.0	-
Total	160 900	139 287	5 000	11 342	165 900	150 629	100.0	100.0

III. ESTIMATED COMPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES

	At the time of formulation of regional programme	At the time of mid-term review
UNDP-administered funds		
Special Programme Resources	2 000 000	6 236 000
Trust funds		879 862
Global Environment Facility	9 500 000	17 500 000
Total	11 500 000	24 615 862